

ATHLETE, SCHOLAR AND PUBLICIST

New Talks Supervisor Has Excelled in Many Fields

THIS week we introduce our readers to J. H. Hall, who succeeds Alan Mulgan (now retired) as Supervisor of Talks for the NZBS. Like his predecessor, Mr. Hall is a noted New Zealand journalist, and he adds to that qualification some fame in the Dominion's national game of Rugby, and in field athletics. Only a short while ago his sole connection with broadcasting was at the receiving end. As a prisoner of war in Germany he was a member of the corps of note-takers who, behind the backs of the guards, helped to keep the camp informed of the latest BBC news. Now he relishes the idea of being at the sending end.

Known to his friends in journalism as "Bert," Mr. Hall, an old boy of the Gore High School, started as a copy-holder (the young fellow who checks the MSS as it is read aloud from proofs) on the staff of the *Southland Times*. When he was 19 he became the paper's chief reporter. Then he went to the reporting staff of the Christchurch *Sun*. The *Sun* sent him to represent it in the Parliamentary Press Gallery where he worked for two years before casting his first Parliamentary vote. He felt then that he went to the ballot box unusually well-informed for a beginner.

For further academic studies he spent three years at the Otago University and, in 1924 he was made cable sub-editor of *The Press*, Christchurch. His first editorship came in 1925 when he was appointed editor of the *Hawera Star*. In 1927 he returned to the Christchurch *Sun* as editor, and stayed there till 1933 when *The Dominion*, Wellington, made him its editor. In 1937 he went abroad for further experience, visiting newspaper offices and addressing a series of public gatherings from coast to coast of Canada, as well as in the middle west of the United States.

After a spell of Empire trade publicity work about London and in the Midlands—"in Birmingham it rained for three weeks without stopping," he says—he went to Scotland for the summer of 1938, in charge of the New Zealand Pavilion at the Glasgow Empire Exhibition. By that time Mrs. Hall and their two children had joined him; and after the exhibition closed the family spent six months in Switzerland, Mr.

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ington some years ago), *Wife to a Famous Man*, *The Two Shepherds*, and *Take Two From One*. Of the Quintero Brothers' plays they translated *The Women Have Their Way*, *The Lady From Ataqueque*, *Love Passes By*, *Don Abel Wrote a Tragedy*, *Fortunato*, and *A Hundred Years Old* (produced by the Wellington Repertory Society a few years ago).

Harley Granville-Barker's life was busy, full, satisfying. A great deal of it, by far the greater part, was spent in the library and the theatre. Although intellectual he was no impractical "bookish" man; although a man of the theatre he was never theatrical. The world is much richer because of his vision and steadfast striving for his ideas and ideals.

Hall being then a temporary collaborator on the Secretariat of the League of Nations at Geneva. War broke out a month after his return to New Zealand.

Captured in Greek Campaign

Mr. Hall then joined the Prime Minister's Department as Deputy-Director of War Publicity and there he stayed till he was appointed official correspondent to the 2nd NZEF, going overseas with the Second Echelon. He was sent to England and later to Egypt where he was appointed Public Relations Officer to the Division. Then came a period of his life on which he looks back without much amusement. After being in Greece he found himself, among others, travelling in the wrong direction—from Kalamata to a German prison camp. But he made the most of his stay behind the barricades, for he read for his LL.M., gaining the degree on return to New Zealand, to add to his M.A., and also to his distinction of being the first Otago University student to secure the Diploma of Journalism of the University of New Zealand.

Debater and Double Blue

To his position of Talks Supervisor Mr. Hall brings a knowledge of debating for, in 1922, he won the University of Otago Debating Society's gold medal. His sporting record is unusual. He was in the famous Otago University First XV. of 1922, all of whose players had played (or played later) for a province, and of whom eight were All Blacks. He had played wing-threequarter for Southland at a time when the competition was restricted to those under military age.

To his blue for Rugby and athletics, Bert Hall added his New Zealand blue for athletics.

The new Talks Supervisor mentioned that he might still be able to "toss the hammer round a bit if he tried."

His experiences as a prisoner-of-war taught him something about the power of radio. "I then realised," he told us, "what a vast influence it has, informing, and above all, inspiring its listeners. On three successive Christmas Days I took notes of the King's Christmas afternoon speeches, each time from a different set and in a different hiding-place; and, of course, Winston Churchill's talks were heard frequently. All of them were of tremendous comfort and help to imprisoned troops."

Mr. Hall was born and brought up on a Southland farm, so he knows something about the land and its products. His father, Andrew Hall, now in his 82nd year, is a retired farmer of Edendale, Southland.

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